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Preface

This paper was presented to the "International Comparative Workshop on Scandal and Reform in Italy and Japan" at the *Japanisch -Deutsches Zentrum*, Berlin 19-20 August 1994, organised by Richard Katz and sponsored by the Conference Group on Italian Politics & Society and the Japan Political Studies Group. The bulk of the research was carried out during the author's period as a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute, Florence. A shorter, amended version of the paper will appear in a book edited by Stephen Gundle and Simon Parker, published by Routledge, and which will focus on the changes which Italian politics underwent in the period 1989-1994.

Introduction

In his more cynical moments, Achille Occhetto, the ex-leader of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), in reviewing the current wreckage of left-wing politics in Italy, might identify the cause of the destruction as resting with himself, and specifically his highly individualistic initiative in October 1989 when he took the communist and non-communist world by surprise in proposing the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its transformation into a non-communist party of the left. After all, the declared objectives of this course of action were not limited to the party itself. On the contrary, in keeping with the most commonly-accepted analysis of the Italian party system, the transformation of the PCI into the PDS (and thus the resolution of the 'communist question') was seen as a prerequisite to two further objectives: unblocking the party system by making alternation in power possible, and the subsequent victory of a left-wing coalition. The causal links between the three objectives, then, were clear-cut from the beginning, and were based on an assumption that, since the power-base of the ruling Christian Democrats (DC) was anti-communism, the removal of communism would render their continued maintenance of power untenable. What was not envisaged, however, was that the successful achievement of the first two objectives would result, four and a half years later, in a crushing defeat of the left and the victory of the most right-wing governing coalition in Italy's post-war history, containing, as it does (for the first time since the fall of Mussolini), Fascist ministers, and based - rhetorically, at least, - on virulent anti-communism.

Seen from this perspective, the events of the five years 1989-94 amounted to a great personal failure for the leader of the PDS and his resignation after the European elections in June 1994 (which saw a further decline in the PDS's vote in relation to the April elections)

is fully understandable. In his less cynical moments, however, Occhetto probably recognises, as a good - although some would doubt this - Marxist, that men do not make history in the manner of their own choosing and rare is it that changes to the body politic are mono-causal. His own role - and indeed that of the party itself - cannot be divorced from the PDS's historical context and from the deep undercurrents at work in Italian politics in this period. Viewed from this perspective, Occhetto can be seen as a party leader navigating, for the first time, completely uncharted waters, the tides of which were not only difficult to see but constantly undergoing change. The constraints under which he made his choices were such that the bitter outcome should be seen more as a general failure of the forces of progress in post-war Italy than the failure of a single leader of the largest party of the Italian left.

This paper documents and explains the changing nature, strategy, tactics and fortunes of the PDS in the period between its birth and the 1994 elections, viewed in the broader perspective of its relationship both to the traditional parties, to the emerging forces of the progressive left, and in the context of the deep changes at work in Italian politics and society. The paper is divided into four parts. The first part analyses the birth of the PDS in the period 1989-91 and the damaging legacy of the internally-contested PCI-PDS transformation. The second part evaluates the PDS's role in the period between its official birth in 1991 and the passing of the electoral reform bill for the Chamber of Deputies in July 1993, which effectively set in motion the long campaign for the national elections in 1994. The third part analyses the PDS's attempt to realign the left and reassure its skeptics in the run-up to the elections. The final part analyses the causes, consequences and significance of the defeat.

The Damaging Legacy of the PCI-PDS Transformation (1989-1991)

Occhetto's decision to dissolve the PCI and create a non-communist party of the left has often been interpreted as a knee-jerk reaction to the revolutions in Eastern Europe. Yet, while it was an evident response to the revolutions and while it clearly represented a break with the past, it was not completely out of keeping with Occhetto's leadership of the party since he took over from Alessandro Natta a little over a year before. The fact that Natta had (unprecedentedly) resigned the leadership over poor local election results and his failure to do anything about reversing a deep political, social and organisational decline, had prompted the new leader into carrying through fundamental changes to the party (Bull 1989). Whether his intentions at that stage were to lead the PCI 'across the ford' is not clear (and it is possible that he was not sure himself), but certainly the Eighteenth Congress, held in March 1989, made major inroads into the communist identity: democratic centralism was effectively dissolved as an organisational principle and the party's teleological nature finally eradicated, the PCI adopting democracy as an eternal value (Bull 1991a). Although the Congress was a huge personal success for Occhetto, the difficulties of completing the reforms became apparent shortly after. The congress's new voting procedure had resulted in an increase in representation of the left, and it was precisely these forces which subsequently opposed the leadership's proposals on the party's heritage and its international alignment in the Summer of 1989. The fierce debate which ensued resulted in a hasty retreat by the leadership and an uneasy compromise which could not hide the deep divisions over the extent of the reform programme.

It was this situation - of incomplete reforms and deep divisions over them - which caused the revolutions in eastern Europe to have such an impact on the party. Until then,

Occhetto and the leadership had been praised by outsiders for the progress they had made on changing the party. They now found themselves derided for their conservatism and lack of conviction as communist parties in eastern Europe began to shed their names and symbols. Occhetto's cautious renewal - a product of the PCI's traditional slowness to change and the divisions inside the party - now counted for very little, and the party found itself in deep crisis by the Autumn of 1989. Yet, Occhetto had already achieved sufficient changes in the direction of liberalising the party to make a giant leap forward possible, something which probably would not have been possible had Natta still been leader. This is not say that Occhetto was simply exploiting the opportunity presented by the events in eastern Europe to speed up his programme of reform and overcome internal resistance by using at the outset an unorthodox method (virtually announcing it in a public speech before even informing the party officially). As already noted, the exact intentions and scope of his reform programme were never clear. The decision, therefore, has to be seen from the perspective of the growing crisis surrounding the party and the limited number of options open to him at that stage. Indeed, it can be argued that by October 1989 the alternatives to taking a giant leap forwards were hardly realistic (Bull 1991b).

The paradoxical argument that Occhetto was happy to 'jump' when 'pushed' is important to explaining the crisis which subsequently engulfed the party and the effects of the crisis on the broader Italian political environment. The fifteen month transition period which the PCI underwent has already been well-documented (Ignazi 1992, Daniels and Bull 1994). Occhetto's proposal split the party in an unprecedented manner, changing radically the alignments inside the party. Opposition to the proposal - amounting to approximately a third of the party - included not only the pro-Soviet *cossuttiani* and the Ingrao left but also

leading *berlingueriani* such as Natta, Pajetta and Tortorella who had until then backed Occhetto's so-called *nuovo corso* ('new course'). Occhetto's support came primarily from the younger members of the leadership (the *quarantenni* or forty year olds) and younger member of the Ingrao left, suggesting that generational differences to some extent traversed the traditional internal alignments.

It took two bitterly contested congresses to transform the party. The PCI's Nineteenth Congress in March 1990 (see Bull and Daniels 1990) dissolved the party and initiated a 'constituent phase' during which *la cosa* ('the thing') - as the 'non-party' became referred to - was meant to be moulded into a new non-communist party for its official birth at the PCI's final congress. Yet, the opposition refused to accept the Nineteenth Congress's historic decision. Arguing that the PCI still, in fact, existed (because its final congress was scheduled) and asserting the sovereignty of the congress (i.e no congress could bind its successors) they proposed the creation of a 'refounded' communist party at the Twentieth Congress, and the debate which had apparently exhausted itself in the run up to the Nineteenth Congress rather fruitlessly continued in similar vein. In the process, reasoned debate about the nature and role of a new non-communist party in Italian politics was submerged. Moreover, a further split amongst Occhetto's supporters (led by Antonio Bassolino) resulted in three motions being presented to the PCI's Twentieth Congress in February 1991: for a *Partito democratico della sinistra* (Democratic Party of the Left - Occhetto), for a *rifondazione comunista* (communist refoundation - Tortorella), and for a *moderno partito antagonista e riformatore* (modern reforming and antagonistic party - Bassolino). By the eve of the Twentieth Congress there was little doubt that Occhetto would succeed, but the real issue at stake was not this; rather it was whether the left around Ingrao

could be convinced, when defeated, to stay in the party. This was achieved through a tactical radicalisation of the new party's foreign policy on the Gulf War (then at its height), although this did not stop the *cossuttiani* from breaking away and forming a new communist party, *Rifondazione comunista* (Bull 1991c).

The manner in which the PDS was born had a significant short-term effect on the changes taking place in Italian politics, and (as will be argued in the next section) on the long-term capacity of the new party to exploit fully those changes. In the short-term, the turmoil the PCI endured between October 1989 and February 1991 and its obsession with internal matters undermined its role in the political arena; indeed, it ceased to be an effective actor on the political stage. The PDS's birth, moreover (as will become apparent below), did little, in the short-term, to offset this damage. This had an important impact on the governing parties, the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Socialists (PSI). Until then it had always been assumed that the ending of the 'communist question' would force both parties to come to terms with a large genuinely reformist party. However, since the resolving of the 'communist question ' was accompanied by a deep crisis of the party itself (with the prospect of its long-term marginalisation as an electoral force), the prospect arose that coming to terms with the party might not be necessary at all. Consequently, they preferred simply to observe the plight of the PCI-PDS (the PSI adopting a particularly skeptical attitude towards the party's transformation) while maintaining their apparent stranglehold on change, epitomised in the continued adherence to the CAF (Craxi-Andreotti-Forlani) line, forged in May 1989. This increased complacency - based on an assumption that the reformist space left by the PCI was unlikely to be filled by an alternative force which would pose a threat to their control of the system - is important to explaining the crisis which subsequently engulfed the DC and PSI

(see Bull and Newell 1993).

In short, the PCI's role in contributing to the sea change in Italian politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s was two-fold. First, in transforming itself into a non-communist party of the left it removed an important linchpin blocking the system. True, it was not solely this which accounted for the subsequent changes (see Bull and Newell 1993: 206-15) and, furthermore, it can, of course, be seen itself as simply a product of the end of communism in eastern Europe. Yet, the rapidity with which Occhetto responded to the collapse of the Berlin Wall (his proposal to dissolve the party was made only five days after) certainly made a crucial difference to the speed of the changes. Second, the subsequent crisis of the party during and immediately after its formal transition also ensured that the changes would be significant by paradoxically prompting complacency in the DC and PSI and thus a failure on their part to react to the deep undercurrents of change at work in Italian politics. Occhetto's decision, then, was a true watershed in the development of the Italian political system.

Yet, the ability of the PDS to exploit the situation which it had (partly) created for itself depended on other more long-term factors. Specifically, to be - or stay - in the vanguard of the changes engulfing the system and thus inherit the fruits of them (in the form of entering government) the party needed to be strong, united, sufficiently 'new' and with a feasible alliance strategy. But, as will be argued below, these four qualities were undermined at the outset by the manner of the new party's birth and were then exacerbated by the particular direction which events in Italy followed. This ensured that the PDS's attempt (already undermined by the emergence of the Northern Leagues and the referenda movement) to monopolise the reform movement - in the sense of providing alternatives to

a collapsing regime - would prove to be a far more complicated operation than expected.

The PDS on the Edge of the Vortex: Agent of Change or Vestige of the Old Regime? (1991-1993)

In one sense, the situation in which the PDS found itself in the period between June 1991 - the referendum on preference voting and the Sicilian elections, which together marked the first rumblings of the imminent electoral earthquake (Bull 1992) - and the electoral reform of July 1993 (which set in motion all parties' tactics for the 1994 national elections) was quite favourable. The PDS was the only established party organisation to remain substantially intact. By mid-late 1993, the membership of the DC and PSI had effectively collapsed under the weight of exposed corruption and it was clear by then that their electoral support would be wiped out at the next elections. The PDS had 800,000 members, 16.5 per cent of the national vote (in 1992, and most of which it expected to hold on to), an infrastructural patrimony estimated in billions of lire, and a wide network of sponsored social and media activities. If, therefore, there existed an established and natural pivot around which a genuine alternative to the collapsing regime could be constructed the PDS seemed to be the obvious candidate.

There were, however, several factors which worked against the PDS in this period and restricted its room for manoeuvre. Not only was the party's strength declining but Italy's transition threw up a number of issues (participation in a transitional government, future political allies, electoral reform, exposure of corruption) which the party was forced to tackle and which exposed the deep divisions which had been carried into the new party (despite the exit of the *cossuttiani)* by Occhetto's sop to the left (over the Gulf War) at the Twentieth

Congress, which had helped to avoid a major split of the *ingraiani* (such a split, of course, would have struck an even mightier blow to the strength of the party's membership and electorate). In spite of the internal shake up caused by the transformation, the conflict between the 'Democratic Communists', the *riformisti* (reformists) and a centre faction around Occhetto were essentially products of the historic divisions in the PCI. Moreover, in an organisation freed of the formal mechanisms of democratic centralism (and one which ensured the different factions' representation in the leading party organs), and in a rapidly changing political environment which required *new* strategic choices to be made, deep conflict became endemic and paralysed any attempt at effective leadership. Indeed, the party found itself continually on the edge of the vortex which had already claimed the DC and PSI, and therefore adopting a strategy less of directing Italy's transition than of reacting to events and trying to ensure its own survival. Its claimed status to be a party of 'the new' rather than of the old system of power was always in doubt.

Electoral and Organisational Strength

Despite remaining organisationally intact, the PDS was a much weaker party than its communist predecessor. The PDS emerged from its first major electoral test (the 1992 national elections) with a 10.5 per cent drop in the share of the vote enjoyed by the PCI in 1987 (McCarthy 1993; Bull and Newell 1993: 216-7). Its 16.1% share of the vote represented an unprecedented haemorrhage of votes. Even if one were to add the share of the vote won by *Rifondazione comunista* (5.6 per cent), the 'political space' previously occupied by the PCI shrank by 4.9%, not an inconsiderable amount in the Italian party system. Its lead over the PSI shrank to 2.5% compared with 12.3% in 1987, the PSI emerging as the leading party of the left in 44 of the 94 provinces compared to its lead in

only nine in 1987; all this when the PSI's vote itself fell by 0.7%, indicating that the rebalancing on the left - even though this itself was to be temporary - was due entirely to the drop in the PDS's vote. The party suffered losses in all regions of the country, with most marked losses focused in the industrialised belts of the North with high concentrations of manual workers and areas of the South where its vote was halved compared with that of 1987.

The fiercely-contested transformation from the PCI to the PDS also cost the organisation 330,240 members between 1990 and 1991. This figure was over three times as high as the 1989-90 loss and eight times as high as the 1988-89 loss, and it was to decline by approximately a further 200,000 in the following year and a half. In addition, the accumulated debts of the party's central administration were, by the end of 1992, 44 *miliardi* to which should be added 120 *miliardi* of debts for the daily *L'Unità* and a further 40 for other editorial activities (*L'Espresso* 3 October 1993: 45). This decline not only confirmed that the PDS was failing to arrest a long-term decline in the PCI's support, but that this trend was accelerating as a result of: the lengthy period of turmoil the party had undergone; the alienation of traditional communist militants caused by the transformation of the PCI; and the presence of a new party to the PDS's left (*Rifondazione comunista*) which competed with it for the PCI's electoral patrimony. The long-standing dilemma, therefore, of where to target new votes was not resolved by the birth of the PDS. Occhetto's objective, affirmed at the Twentieth Congress, was that the PDS would broaden the electoral constituency of the old PCI by attracting disillusioned Socialist voters, 'progressive catholics', the 'hidden left' and first-time voters. The 1992 elections seemed to be confirmation that the PDS was failing to attract such a disparate constituency.

Participation in Government

The question arose as to whether or not the PDS should assist in stabilizing the Amato (1992-93) and Ciampi (1993-94) governments either through supporting or participating in them. Were these governments fundamental to the transition which the Italian republic was undergoing or were they simply last gasps of the old regime? In the crisis which followed the 1992 elections - when a government could not be formed and President Cossiga subsequently resigned in a gesture of desperation - there was much speculation as to the likelihood of the PDS being persuaded to join the government. The PDS resisted any such notions not only because of Craxi's continued hostility towards the PDS but because such a move would make the party more vulnerable to the electoral challenge posed by the *Lega* and *Rifondazione comunista* and would alienate the left of the party (Hellman 1993: 149-50). The party could not be seen to be propping up a government which - despite its self-proclaimed status as 'transitional' - survived through the support of the old parties of government. Occhetto stated that a fundamental condition for PDS participation in government was "the non-participation in such a government of men and women who participated in the old regime" (*La Repubblica,* 8 August 1993). The government was subjected to fierce criticism and a no-confidence motion. Yet, members of the right of the party were never happy with this position. Still basing their strategy on a governing alliance with the PSI and believing that it was important to participate positively in the transition to the new, several leading party members (such as Gianfranco Borghini, Michele Magno and Filippo Cavazzuti) openly disagreed with both the party's refusal to enter the government and the no-confidence motion.[1]

This festering divide was brought out fully over the question of participation in the Ciampi government which was formed after the referenda in April 1993. Amato, in his resignation speech, announced the 'death of a regime', and Scalfaro's appointment of the first non-party Prime-Minister in the Republic's history was meant to symbolise the genuinely transitional nature of the new government, something confirmed by Ciampi himself who limited his government's objectives to carrying through the Finance Bill and electoral reform for the Chamber of Deputies. The former, for Occhetto, was a prerequisite to the holding of further elections, and the party agreed to holding three Ministries. Yet, he was also aware that there were many in the party, including his own deputy, Massimo D'Alema, who had deep reservations about the PDS participating in a government led by the epitome of the establishment (the ex-Governor of the Bank of Italy), alongside a number of faces from the old nomenclature. Consequently, when, the day after the birth of the government, Parliament refused to lift Craxi's parliamentary immunity for four of the six requests by the magistrates (which the editor of *La Repubblica*, Eugenio Scalfari described, as "the gravest day in the history of our Republic, save the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro"[2]), Occhetto did not hesitate to pull his Ministers out (the Greens and Republicans doing likewise).

As Ciampi pointed out, there was no formal connection between the formation of the government and the behaviour of the parliament supporting it, but Occhetto unmistakedly saw the political implications of participating in a government whose parliament was now openly discredited. Yet, the alternative to participation - outright opposition along the lines that the left of the party wanted - would be equally unrewarding. It would fail to achieve electoral reform and would be perceived by many as hindering Italy's transition. Consequently, the PDS abstained on the reformulated Ciampi government, and the party was left in disarray

by the whole affair. The 'Democratic Communists' toed the party line but only, noted Tortorella, out of respect for party discipline (Ingrao's daughter, in fact, voted against the government). The right of the party, and particularly Vincenzo Visco, who was Ciampi's Minister of Finance for about eleven hours, disagreed with the decision to pull out the Ministers and saw it as a further compromise by Occhetto to avoid a rupture with the left.

The Search for Political Allies

The divisions over the PDS's role in relation to government during the transition period were a reflection of the broader problem of the party's alliance strategy. The PCI had long been divided over this question. Paradoxically, at the moment when the right of the party could have hoped to have its way (because of the increasing marginalisation of the left in the new party) its long-proposed strategy (of a political alliance with the PSI as the cornerstone of an alternative government) was becoming untenable. Indeed, a combination of the PSI's collapse, splits in the traditional parties and the emergence of new umbrella movements re-opened the question of the PDS's future allies and threw the party into turmoil. Symptomatic of the confusion was the leadership's decision, in early 1993, to flirt with the *Lega*, despite having, until then, presented the PDS as a bastion of protection against the movement. Claudio Pettrucioli argued that the Northern Leagues were no longer a taboo for the left and Massimo D'Alema emphasised the positive aspects of the changes which their policies had undergone. This brought a hostile reaction from Ingrao who reminded the leadership that he had not taken out life membership of the party (and, in fact, he left the party in May of that year).[3] More importantly, the birth of the Democratic Alliance (*Alleanza Democratica*, AD) in early 1993 with Mario Segni at its head openly divided the party. In May 1993 22 PDS parliamentary members (including influential members such as Augusto Barbera, Willer

Bordon and the editor of *L'Unità*, Walter Veltroni) approved a document giving full support to AD. They saw it as the beginning of a new party of the centre-left within which the PDS might ultimately dissolve itself. 53 parliamentary members opposed the move, fearing that party members' insertion into an umbrella organisation of the centre-left could only weaken the party, and announced their intention of creating a genuine alliance of the left. This question - as will be seen in the next section - would become critical after the passing of the electoral reform bill in the Summer of 1993.

Electoral Reform

The leadership's tackling of this issue was more controversial than any other, and saw leading party members campaigning on opposite sides in the referendum campaign.[4] A fundamental part of Occhetto's original 'new course' (i.e. before the dissolution of the PCI) had been using institutional reform to unblock the political system. Reforms were to be proposed which would provide parties with an incentive to ally together (on the left and right) and this incentive, accompanied by changes to the PCI itself, would provide the conditions for achieving alternation in government. This led the PCI into criticising - for the first time in its history - the principle of proportional representation as it operated in Italy and then into proposing an electoral system (*doppio turno)* modelled on the lines of the French second ballot system (see Occhetto 1987 & 1988). This system would effectively force voters to choose between a left and right coalition of forces with the PCI/PDS as the dominant left force, thus undermining the DC's central fulcrum position and opening the way to alternation in government.

The problem, however, was that even if the leadership could - with difficulty - obtain

unity on this line, the main impetus to achieve electoral reform came, from 1991 onwards, from forces who did not favour the PDS's *doppio turno*. When Mario Segni launched his 'Referendum Pact' to achieve electoral reform, the leadership decided - despite the reservations of the left - to sign it, even though Segni favoured a plurality system. For the PDS, the problem with this system was that psephological predictions suggested that the system's effect would be to divide the country geographically and ideologically into three with the *Lega* dominating the north, the PDS the centre and the DC the south. Ideologically, this would leave the DC still in the centre thus providing it with as much a pivotal role as ever. When the referendum on the Senate's electoral system (which would introduce a 'mixed' system: majoritarian with a proportional element) was eventually declared to be constitutionally admissible by the Constitutional Court in January 1993 the PDS's dilemma was complete: the leadership was strongly in favour of electoral reform in principle, but the referendum would create an electoral system the party did not, in fact, want and which would, in all likelihood, lead to a similar reform being implemented in the Chamber of Deputies.

Losing control over the direction of the electoral reform programme resulted in a deep division inside the party, with the two wings openly campaigning against each other. The left of the party around Ingrao refused to support a reform which would increase the centrality of the DC, and found itself allied in the 'no' campaign with the Greens, the *Rete*, *Rifondazione Comunista* and the MSI. The majority of the party, meanwhile, found itself in alliance with Segni and the traditional ruling parties which had seen that if some kind of electoral reform was inevitable, this one was probably more desirable than others. Abse (1993: 19) has described Occhetto's decision as 'treachery' because it was inconceivable that

the *doppio turno* could subsequently be achieved for the Chamber of deputies if the 'si' campaign for the Senate was successful. However, as Salvati (1993: 118-21) points out, standing for 'No' was hardly a viable choice because of the significance that the yes/no dichotomy had acquired in the electorate. The general changes which were sweeping through the Italian body politic had become indelibly associated with a 'yes' vote in the referendum. This despite the fact that the traditional parties 'of the system', against which the people were apparently voting (and against which they had voted in the 1991 referendum), had joined the reformist camp, and the 'parties of opposition' (bar the majority of the PDS) had come out against change. Whatever the specific consequences of the reform being passed, voting 'yes' signified, in the eyes of the Italian public, the final nail in the First Republic's coffin. The result bears this out. Despite an extraordinary level of confusion during the campaign, with both the 'yes' and 'no' camps arguing that a majority of votes for the other side would have the effect of buttressing the 'old system of power', 82.7% voted in favour of the reform. Furthermore, the result, combined with similar outcomes in seven other referenda, prompted the resignation of the Prime Minister, Guiliano Amato who (as already noted) interpreted the result as effectively bringing to an end Italy's 'First Republic' (Newell and Bull 1993).

The issue of electoral reform, then, split the PDS and left it in a position where its referendum campaign was very ambivalent. Some members campaigned against the reform, some members were disingenuous (arguing as if the choice was between the *doppio turno* or no reform) and some were half-hearted, arguing that they wanted the 'yes' vote to succeed but with a substantial number of 'no's' to justify the carrying through of a different type of reform for the Chamber of Deputies. Whether or not this last belief was held sincerely (Salvati 1993: 120 argues that it was) the paltry 17.3% who voted against the reform was

insufficient to harness cross-party support for the introduction of the *doppio turno* in the Chamber of Deputies, and the PDS's proposal was easily rejected by the Parliament and a 'mixed' system adopted in the Summer of 1993.

New or Old? The PDS's Ambivalent Identity

Even if the PCI-PDS transformation was not solely responsible for prompting the huge changes in Italian politics, the fact that the PCI had completed the major phase of its own formal changes before those changes really began, gave the party an advantageous position over others. Because the PDS had made a genuine attempt to change itself it was possible to see it as a 'new' party. By comparison, the DC and PSI's subsequent attempts at change amounted to desperate eleventh hour attempts to recycle themselves through some cosmetic changes and internal splits. These parties were already in the vortex, their membership and support draining away fast, and the changes did little to save them. Yet, if the Twentieth Congress represented the end of the formal transition of the PCI into the PDS, it represented only the beginning of the process which would shape the new party, and this process was fraught with problems which undermined the leadership's effort to present the PDS as the chief reformist party which could guide Italy in its transition. Three factors were particularly salient: organisational matters, divisions over the party's identity, and the exposure of corruption.

First, organisational changes were slow to materialise and hesitant in their direction, as was confirmed at the party's National Assembly held in March 1993.[5] Mauro Zani, the Emilian leader responsible for party organisation, stated that the party recognised that the era of the 'party apparatus' was over and that the organisational practices of the post-war period

had to be rethought. The PDS, he said, was prepared to call its traditional form of organisation into question but not in the way that was being demanded by AD (dissolving the party and merging it into a 'party-movement'). Yet, the PDS's own organisational project was hardly convincing. Zani spoke of a 'confederal project' of the left within which a new PDS might participate. The party, he said, was involved in a big organisational experiment which had begun with the abolition of democratic centralism and would now move towards the abolition of centralism itself. Yet, the leadership was equally aware of the danger of acute factionalism if too much central control were relinquished. Occhetto spoke of his belief in a 'third way' between democratic centralism and factionalism which could be achieved through an organisation inspired by the principle of 'decentralised centralism' (*sic*), and he reminded the party of the necessity of internal discipline, baldly challenging (in his closing speech) those who were criticising him to say openly if they wished him to resign.

It was, in fact, the persistence of internal divisions (which were noted earlier) which hindered the new party's consolidation. In particular, the existence, in a non-communist organisation, of a self-proclaimed 'Democratic Communist' faction weakened the claim that an irrevocable break with the past had occurred. Indeed, the PCI's *diversità* (its claim to be 'different' from other parties) which had once been an important source of cohesion in the party quickly became a source of conflict as party members who had opposed the change refused to renounce it, and even many supporting the change failed to adapt quickly to the need for a new culture inside the party (Bull 1994). This caused considerable disillusionment amongst the members of the Independent Left who had participated in the PCI's transition, and many left the new party.

The third factor - the exposure of corruption which threatened to engulf the PDS - compounded the problem and threw the leadership into a paradoxical dilemma. If, between 1992 and 1993, the magistrates' action decimated the DC and PSI as effective political forces it did not leave the main opposition party untouched.[6] On the contrary, by the Summer of 1993 over 70 members of the party were officially under investigation for corruption, and many of them had been arrested. This number was to increase considerably in the period after October 1993 when Craxi began co-operating with the magistrates and exposing a number of other apparently illicit PDS activities. The allegations to which the investigations led - including illegal funding from the Soviet Union, participation in a KGB-run *Gladio* network in Italy, and sharing in many of the kick-backs in contracts for transport, construction and large industry - became progressively more serious in their import and in personnel involved: May 1993 saw the arrest of the party's ex-treasurer, Renato Pollini (the existing treasurer, Stefanini had long been under investigation) and the party's controller of the cooperatives responsible for construction activities, Fausto Bartolini. In the Summer Massimo D'Alema was implicated in illicit funding activities and rumours abounded that Occhetto himself was next on the list (D'Alema was placed officially under investigation by the magistrates in January 1994).

The details of this judicial march into the heart of *Botteghe oscure* (the PDS headquarters) are less relevant than its political effects, which were to spark off a big debate on the role of the PCI in the 'First Republic', and thus the PDS's electoral credentials. That the party had never been totally isolated from a share in state patronage and policy-making had long been well known, but the extent to which it may have apparently participated in a systemic network of illegal kickbacks was a shock to many and caused panic amongst party

militants. It was after all Berlinguer who had made *la questione morale* a crusade for the PCI against the traditional parties. The PDS's critics seized on the opportunity to portray the PCI-PDS as never having been different to any of the traditional ruling parties in terms of its domestic activities. The allegations, they argued, confirmed that the system was rotten to the core and that only genuinely new parties could claim to be apart from the corruption. The PDS leadership fought a continual rearguard action to try and prevent these assertions sticking. Paradoxically, the thrust of this (evidently) coordinated action was to emphasise precisely that which the leadership had been, until then, attempting to overcome: the party's *diversità*, its distinctiveness from all other political forces. It was argued that there was a clear difference between the 'individual' or isolated instances of PDS corruption and the *system* of corruption which had been operated by the DC and PSI. There was, furthermore, a difference, Occhetto argued, between what most PDS officials had been charged with - violating the law on the financing of parties by accepting undeclared (and therefore illegal) contributions to party funds - and that which most DC and PSI officials were charged with: corruption through operating a system of kickbacks for personal and party enrichment. The PDS, Occhetto was at pains to stress time and again, had a 'clean face'; the party had always been, and remained, 'different' to all the others. Many of the accusations, it was suggested, formed part of a plot to prevent the left coming to power.

This position became increasingly unconvincing and difficult to sustain, as the number of allegations and arrests climbed the party hierarchy. The absence of any real explanation and the silence on the role of Soviet financing left many questions unanswered. More importantly, the use of the generic argument of *diversità* - which justified, for the leadership, the reticence - represented a backwards step with regard to the new party's objectives, which

were to free the party from this type of association. What appeared to be an instrumental use of a concept founded on the idea of 'moral superiority' not only prompted ferocious criticism from various quarters (and particularly from the *Lega* and the Vatican) but muddied and retarded the development of a new culture inside the party, unwittingly giving support to those who had opposed the party's transformation.[7] Indeed, the PDS found itself in a dilemma from which it was unlikely to escape criticism. On the one hand, to respond to the criticism that it was still 'communist' the leadership had to argue that it was no longer 'different' to the other parties; on the other hand, to respond to the criticism of systemic corruption the leadership argued the reverse. The danger was that it would lose both arguments i.e. that it would be perceived as still 'communist' but no 'different' to the other parties when it came to the moral issue. The situation was testing of even the most loyal militant and voter.

To summarize this period, the PDS, as the traditional party of opposition, found itself unable to exploit fully the collapse of the governing parties and the transition which Italian politics was undergoing. Rather than being a forceful agent of change, the party found itself continually battling for its own survival, confronted with difficult issues which divided the party and left it reacting to changes rather than directing them itself. The party's difficulties in the face of the magistrates' investigations and allegations confirmed that the PDS had (long) ceded the 'moral issue' to other political forces, and particularly the *Lega*. As Salvati (1993: 122) notes, 'there had always been a lot of uneasiness inside the PCI about political corruption'. This unease became, in 1992-93, confusion and fear and undermined the attempt to portray the PDS as a new party rather than one of the old system of power.

Realigning the Left and Reassuring the Skeptics (1993-1994)

The defeat, in June 1993, of the PDS's proposed electoral reform and the subsequent approval of a single ballot 'mixed' system changed what were indirect pressures on the PDS to seek new allies into direct ones. The *doppio turno* would have enabled the party to retain its independence fully and secure definite allies after the first ballot. Now, all parties, in order to survive, had to forge alliances before the first ballot itself took place. The Parliament's decision, then, did not change the PDS's strategy radically (although, as will be seen, it did modify it), but brought it more explicitly out into the open: to establish the party as a *bona fide* leader of a left of centre majority coalition. This involved, broadly speaking, two concomitant sets of activities: first, taking the initiative as the primary party of the left to forge such an alliance; second, establishing the PDS's political and economic credentials to lead such an alliance.

The Progressive Alliance

The departure of Segni from AD in September 1993, his launching of the *Patto per rinascita nazionale* ('Pact for National Renewal') and discussions with Martinazzoli (signifying the formers' likely return to the centre) presented both a problem and a solution to the PDS. The problem was that, until then, an alliance with the influential Segni had been seen as the best means of wooing the 'social centre': the middle classes who had broken with the old parties but who felt no affinity to the *Lega* or the far left. The solution was that the definitive departure of Segni, coupled with the new electoral law and the continued demise of the DC, closed down what was always an unlikely coalition (Segni and the PDS) and freed the PDS to pursue more vehemently an alliance strategy based on a projected bipolarisation of the party system. Indeed, from there on, the PDS became the most forceful exponent of

bipolarisation, and a subtle shift occurred in its strategy towards making a stronger opening towards the forces of the centre-left. In late October and early November 1993 Occhetto launched the idea of a grand alliance of progressive forces stretching from the left to the centre whose objective would be 'to determine progressively a bipolarisation of the Italian political struggle in which the forces which currently occupy the centre will have to make the decisive choice of whether to stay with the left or the right.'[8] In such an alliance, the PDS was willing to give equal dignity to both small and large forces, and the PDS was willing to renounce its own symbol for a common symbol in some constituencies. For the forces to whom this appeal was addressed (and particularly those to the party's right) this represented an important step. It ended claims to ideological hegemony, and it seemed to bury any pretensions to a pure alliance of the left which might then extend towards the centre (in two stages), thus apparently ending the PDS's ostracism of the so-called 'moderates'.

The problem, however, was what exactly 'progressive' meant, or, put another way, how far such an alliance should stretch to the left on the one hand and to the centre on the other. Occhetto's response to this question (in an interview in December 1993) was conveniently abstract in content. The alliance, he said, would stop moving rightwards 'at the point where the need for efficiency and the market become enemies of the need for solidarity', and it would stop moving leftwards 'when the need for solidarity and "paradise on earth" clashes with the necessity of guaranteeing an orderly economic development which aspires to the European model.'[9] The PDS wanted all forces of a potential 'progressive arc' to participate in the formulation of an alliance: the PSI, *Rinascita socialista* (both of which were products of the splitting of the old PSI into four groups), the *Rete*, the Greens, the Social-Christians, AD and RC. The PDS, moreover, would not accept *a priori* exclusions

of one political force by another.

This approach was understandable. On the one hand, the PDS was aware that to attract the 'lost' voters of the centre, it was essential to include AD and, if possible, the Social-Christians who had broken away from the DC (this would also, of course, place considerable pressure on Segni to rethink his position). On the other hand, the Spring local elections had confirmed that to prevent a significant loss of votes to the left, particularly in the regions of the 'red belt', the PDS could not afford to exclude *Rifondazione comunista* (RC) from any such alliance. In a sense, the PDS's own project was a latent compromise between two others represented by AD, on the one hand, and RC, on the other, both of which should be briefly looked at.

RC's shift from outright hostility towards the PDS and any notions of an alliance to, by late 1993, a position which expressed a willingness to participate in the construction of an electoral alliance can be explained by three reasons which were negative in orientation. Firstly, it saw the proposals of the right (the *Lega* and the MSI followed later by *Forza Italia!*) as a threat to Italian democracy. In line, therefore with a long Italian communist tradition, it viewed an alliance of all progressive forces to prevent a right-wing victory as paramount. Secondly, RC felt that its presence would stop a progressive alliance developing in too centrist a direction (it could not hope for anything more than this i.e. a genuine project of the left). Thirdly, the new electoral system meant that the party effectively needed allies to survive. AD's project, on the other hand, was to achieve a new social and political equilibrium of a reformist type. It viewed the primary danger as coming less from the far right than from the construction of a neo-liberal, conservative coalition between the centre

and the right. The loss of Segni had been a blow to AD, but did not alter its objective, particularly as it seemed now that Segni's project had always been predicated on the unity of all catholics, something which was antipathetic to AD. But a genuine reformist alliance could only succeed if it attracted the votes of a large proportion of the electorate of the centre, and RC's presence would inevitably undermine this attempt. Indeed, it would involve a massive exercise of reassurance about the communists, something confirmed by RC's consistent adoption of positions which were alien to most of its potential alliance partners, including the PDS. In domestic policy, RC proposed a tax on Italian Treasury Bonds (the 'BOT'), it voted against Ciampi's Finance Bill and opposed his work on reducing the public deficit, it was against the FIAT-trade union accord involving lay offs and work reductions, and wanted to see the reintroduction of the *scala mobile* (wage-indexation system) and a shelving of plans to privatise key sectors of industry. In foreign policy, it proposed withdrawal from NATO, supported a non-intervention policy in Yugoslavia, and also expressed its open support for Castro's regime in Cuba. In general, its policies were inspired by the traditional objective of heightening class struggle.

One can see, therefore, that the PDS's version of a 'progressive alliance' was a muddled attempt to avoid the choice between a genuine left-wing alliance (which would exclude political forces deemed to be too centrist and would be electorally unrealistic) and a genuine (i.e a potential governing) alliance of the centre-left (which would automatically exclude RC), by embracing the widest alliance possible. But in doing so, the party was confronted with the fact that any such alliance could only be essentially defensive in nature i.e. an alliance formed to stop the right electorally rather than actually to govern. There was, consequently, much talk about the feasibility of a 'two-stage' alliance i.e. whether a

successful electoral pact (based on a common symbol and stand-down arrangements) could be translated into a governmental pact after the elections through the departure of RC.

The formulation of the alliance was, therefore, slow and characterised by intense negotiation and conflict in which the question of policies and programme became necessarily rather submerged.[10] While the PDS leadership was content to see all forces of the potential 'progressive arc' included in an alliance, there were reservations about this from the left of the party, and many of the other parties wished to see at least one of the other forces excluded. The *Rete* and the Greens were adamant that the PSI should not be included, despite the departure of the *craxiani*, because of the party's association with the old order; the PSI and AD were vehemently against the inclusion of RC; and about a third of RC was skeptical about an operation involving forces which had little or nothing to do with the left. Two factors eventually forced the issue. First, in local elections in December the flexible operation of tactical alliances by the left led to resounding successes. PDS-led coalitions gained control of all six cities where polling took place (Genoa, Naples, Rome, Trieste, Venice and Palermo) and 53 out of 129 local governments (with populations over 15,000). This not only confirmed that, whatever the difficulties, alliances were essential for a left-wing victory, but also that the PDS was the pivot around which any alliance could be built and that compromises with what it wanted might have to be made by other political forces (both to its left and to its right). Second, the entry of Berlusconi's *Forza Italia!* into the political fray made the formation of the alliance more pressing. Even though this move tended to confirm AD's fears (of a successful centre-right coalition), the logic of this position (i.e. that a positive (governing) coalition should be formed) was not followed through; rather, as *Forza Italia!'s* support rose steadily (through the opinion polls) emphasis was placed on the need

for a 'stopping alliance'.

The Progressive Alliance's programmatic declaration of intent was launched in February 1994, and, understandably, focused more on intent than programme. The eight parties making up the Alliance were the PDS, PSI, RS (*Rinascita socialista*), the *Rete*, the Greens, C-S (*cristiano-sociali*), AD and RC). The declaration's main points were: an extension of political democracy through a 'closer relationship between rights and needs'; a decentralisation of power; the promotion of economic growth and improvement in the state of the public finances; efforts to increase employment; making the economy more dynamic through combatting abuses of the welfare state and, where necessary, introducing privatisation; protecting the poorest in society; an increase in the drive against corruption; improvements in education, training, health and social services; protection of the nation's cultural and environmental heritage. The striking characteristic about this programme was its moderation, something confirmed when the PDS's own election manifesto, closely resembling the Progressive's declaration, was published shortly after. If there was a starting point in the declaration of intent it was continuity with Ciampi (although RC vehemently denied this) and a recognition that in the existing economic conjuncture there was only a limited amount of manoeuvre possible. Indeed, the PDS had constantly argued that Ciampi's was the first government which had made genuine progress in key areas: two successive budgets to attack the huge fiscal deficit and government debt, with further cuts in public expenditure targeted for the 1994 budget; the beginnings of a privatisation programme (banks, insurance companies, industrial firms) to ease the fiscal deficit further and change the historic role of the Italian state; labour market reforms to attack structural unemployment; and the elimination of wage-indexation. The PDS's goal was to build on these achievements

and it was even prepared to see Ciampi reappointed as Prime Minister at the head of a progressive alliance.

The programme was accompanied by a common symbol (a tri-coloured wave) and stand-down arrangements for single-member constituencies. The latter proved far more difficult to achieve than in the local elections in December, because each of the parties was determined to win as much parliamentary representation as possible. There were fierce accusations by the smaller parties, and particularly AD and C-S, of old-style *lottizzazione*, and the arrangements had to be renegotiated at length in February. The constant divisions which emerged in the alliance right up to polling day betrayed the fact that the 'realignment' of the left was primarily a cosmetic operation forced on it by the logic of the new electoral system, and that the election result would determine its real future.

The PDS's Credentials

The slow and painful construction of the alliance was accompanied by a concerted campaign by the PDS to establish its credentials with the electorate. This became of primordial importance after the local government elections in December when the PDS emerged as a prime contender for national government and after the subsequent anti-communist crusade embarked on by *Forza Italia!* and the other forces of the right. The PDS sought to show its moral, economic and political credentials to govern. Morally, it continued its campaign (see above) which argued that while it was true that there were certain instances of PDS corruption the party had never been involved in systematic corruption along the lines of the

DC and PSI. Economically and politically, the party reaffirmed the moderation of its policies and its belief that Ciampi's policies should be the basis of continued renewal, and the leadership went about a series of high-level meetings to reassure key economic and political elites that the PDS was a reliable political force which no longer presented a threat to the establishment. Party delegations met with *Confindustria*, a number of individual businessmen and industrialists, members of the Italian and international financial community, the head of the Italian army, and the NATO leadership at its headquarters in Belgium. These reassurances, it was argued, were supported by evidence of genuine turnover in the ranks of those standing for election: only 94 out of 173 existing deputies were standing again for election.

There can be little doubt that the PDS's campaign to reassert itself in the months before the elections had some effect. First, although the party's position on corruption was ultimately unconvincing, local elections and opinion polls confirmed that it was not having a detrimental impact on the party's support. Second, the high-level meetings brought forth positive responses from key areas of the establishment. Indeed, by the eve of the election it was evident from various public statements that the 'veto' on the old PCI of the United States government, NATO, *Confindustria*, the international banking community, the Italian industrial community and the old centre parties was, at least informally, a thing of the past. The most vivid confirmation of this came, however, not in words but in stocks and shares. In late November 1993, when the lira took another dive Occhetto helped stabilise the currency by announcing that his party would ensure that the Finance Bill would pass. 'Incubo rosso addio' ('Farewell to the Red Peril') proclaimed *La Repubblica*: after years in which a small percentage increase in the PCI's vote would shake the stock exchange the PDS was

now acting as a stabilising force on the markets. In short, in the four and a half years since the collapse of the Berlin Wall the party had seen a number of other less visible, but as tangible, 'walls' fall, providing the party with its first genuine opportunity to reach the long-awaited *stanza dei bottoni* ('control room'). But the electorate necessary to exploit that opportunity ultimately proved elusive.

The 1994 Defeat: Causes and Consequences

To most observers the defeat of the left was not unexpected, although its scale perhaps was. In relation to the all previous elections in the post-war period the percentage obtained by the Progressives (34.6%) was (probably) the lowest 'the left' (a changing and unclear concept itself) had obtained since the historic 1948 defeat (31%). True, the PDS's share of the vote in the proportional element of the election (which, due to stand-down arrangements in the single member constituencies, provides the most accurate comparison with the past) increased to 20.4% (from 16.1% in 1992), but this figure has to be seen in the context of a different electoral system, the complete transformation of the party system between the two elections and the failure of the Progressive Alliance to exploit the collapse in the DC's and PSI's vote (resulting in a electorally marginal new centre).[11] The confirmation, and in some cases strengthening of, the PDS heartlands brought little comfort to a party which had missed its greatest opportunity since the war to gain power.

Naturally, to a large extent, the left's defeat is best accounted for through explaining the right's (and particularly *Forza Italia's*) victory (the subject of a different paper). Nevertheless, several points can be made which start with the left and which are essential to

any overall explanation. First, because the Progressive Alliance was made up of several small parties, it suffered from the new 4% threshold rule for the proportional element, as all of the parties except for the PDS and RC, failed to cross the threshold and obtain seats in the proportional allocation.

Second, because the Progressive alliance was formed so late in the day and with such difficulty, the 'joyous war machine' (as Occhetto described it) never had the time to make the transition from tackling its internal problems to a campaigning on the basis of a united front. Indeed, the two became hopelessly entangled as the campaign progressed, and RC's position on several issues became clearer. The PDS leadership seemed to spend as much time explaining away the differences between RC and the rest of the alliance as it did on publicising the policies of the Progressives. The bickering inside the alliance impeded the presentation of an effective message to the electorate.

Third, that message was ultimately unconvincing because the Progressives were hardly credible as a *governing* alliance. The vast differences between RC and the other partners on various policies confirmed that the formation of a government based on the Alliance was unlikely. It is obviously difficult to predict whether there would have been a net gain in votes to the Progressives had RC been excluded, but, in the eyes of most of the partners of the Alliance and many in the PDS itself, Occhetto's insistence on the inclusion of RC was the primary cause of the defeat. Occhetto was later to pay a high price (his leadership of the party) for his determination to stick with a tradition of compromise which went back to Togliatti.

Fourth, the Progressives appeared leaderless. This was a cost the Alliance bore for the PDS renouncing any hegemonic intentions over it, a precondition for some of the partners. The natural head of the Alliance, and therefore choice for Prime Minister, was Occhetto as leader of the largest party. His name, however, was only put forward as a candidate for the premiership with two others, Napolitano and Ciampi, and it was the last of these who commandeered most support within the Alliance. Yet, Ciampi was not campaigning or running for the Progressives. This situation contrasted strongly with the right where (despite protestations to the contrary from the leader of the *Lega*, Bossi) Berlusconi appeared as the leader of the Freedom Alliance and natural candidate for the premiership. Berlsuconi was able to personalise the election campaign, something which the Progressives could not, and did not want to, do (even though the television debate between Occhetto and Berlusconi was one of the high points of the campaign). This factor might not have been so important had the party system not undergone so much change. But in a campaign where three - and primarily two - fixed alliances were campaigning as potential governments in waiting, the Progressives appeared to be rooted in the old politics with the direction of the Alliance dependent upon the negotiating power of the various party leaders.

This introduces the final reason for the defeat: the PDS was outwitted in its promotion of the idea of the bipolarisation of the party system. As already noted, the PDS began to pursue this idea in earnest while the centre and the far right were in disarray, and it therefore suited the party to be able to present a choice between a united left and an old-style, extremist, weak and divided right, with the centre expected to split between the two. Berlusconi's entry into the political arena, however, challenged the PDS on its own chosen terrain and the party's position, when placed in stark contrast to that of the new centre-right,

was found wanting in all respects. Berlusconi was able to polarise the choice between several dichotomies and the PDS's image was always on the wrong side of them.

The first dichotomy was between old and new, Berlusconi claiming the latter. The PDS struggled to present itself as something new, but both its association with corruption and the general revulsion of the public and the media against *partitocrazia* (the old 'rule by parties') left the PDS with an image of being one of the old parties. Indeed, the onslaught against the old system by progressive sections of the media tended to undermine those forces which they would have favoured for victory.

The second dichotomy was between change and lack of change. Before Berlusconi's entry the PDS was able to present itself as the pivot around which change could be achieved. However, Occhetto's quest for respectability eventually worked against him when the PDS had to compete directly with *Forza Italia!* The mood of the Italian people was for *discontinuity*. The PDS, by the election, stood for 'continuity with Ciampi' while Berlusconi - through some lavish promises - was able to portray his movement as the essential agent of change. Occhetto's decision, during the campaign, to begin courting the centre parties (when he realised that the Progressives were only likely to come to power in such an alliance) confirmed for many the impression that this was 'politics as usual.'

The third dichotomy was between the public and the private sector or the state and the market. Berlusconi chose the private sector and the market as his primary terrain from where he was able to launch a ferocious assault on the PDS and the Progressives as old-style *statalisti* ('state-lovers'). This presented the PDS with several problems. First, the idea of

state control had been progressively undermined across the western world. Secondly, the specific Italian variant which had developed was completely discredited because it was viewed as the source of party control and ensuing corruption. Thirdly, the PDS, as Pasquino (1994: 5) points out, had great difficulty in shaking off its association with the state because, as a genuine party of the left, it could not simply renounce the philosophy of the value of certain forms of state management or control. Yet, fourthly, it saw the force of Berlsuconi's challenge too late to formulate, for the electorate, an effective vision of state regulation which would distinguish it from the (corrupt) past and provide a more exciting prospect than Berlusconi's free market economy. In Pasquino's words (1994: 6):

> The Progressives did not know how to forward either their idea of a reformed, efficient, incorrupt state or their project for a new people's politics (in terms of behaviour, content and style). The would-be reformers, who were in a position to break with the past and lay the foundations for a better Republic, appeared - and in a few cases had been and continued to be - participants of the system, heirs of the old politics, the supporters of continuity.

The consequences of the defeat for the PDS were predictable. Occhetto's leadership had always been controversial and - in contrast to all previous leaders of the party - never free from fierce and open criticism. The 1994 results unleashed a debate on the mistakes of the PDS and the Progressive Alliance which echoed much of the pre-election debate. Occhetto found himself criticised from the left of his party and the Alliance for failing to construct a genuine left-wing alliance and from the right for not pursuing vigorously an alliance with the political forces of the centre, the PPI and Segni. The defeat and the debate

which followed dealt a mortal blow to Occhetto's leadership and only excellent results in the European elections in June could have saved him. The Progressive Alliance began to disintegrate and dissent with the leadership increased inside the party. PDS losses in the European elections confirmed the inevitable and Occhetto resigned on a bitter note; similar resignations were announced by the leaders of the PSI and AD, Ottaviano Del Turco and Willer Bordon.

Yet, Occhetto's - and the PDS's - failure to control and direct the Italian transition and thus prevent a right wing outcome, should not go unqualified. Firstly, the historical record suggests that the size of the potential left-wing electorate in Italy has rarely been above 40% (1976 being the exception), so a successful left-wing alliance was objectively always a very difficult task. Second, the tradition of 'exclusion politics' (of the left at least) was too historically deeply-rooted to be easily overcome in the relatively short period of time between 1989 and 1994 to enable a genuine alliance to be created of the forces of the centre and the left which might have greater appeal and more numerical force than the right. There were too many suspicions and historic reservations on the part of both sides (Segni, Martinazzoli, La Malfa etc. on the one hand and Occhetto, Del Turco, Orlando, Bertinotti etc. on the other) for any progress of substance to be made in this area. Finally, and perhaps more positively, although Occhetto and the PDS failed to gain power they nonetheless succeeded in making alternation in government *possible*, something which had not existed before 1989. This can be viewed as a signal achievement of the 1989-94 period. Nevertheless, translating this possibility into reality will require considerable work. Before anything else, it will require a serious and profound debate on how a modern, reformist and united opposition to Berlsuconi can be created and how such an opposition should, in the new

situation, comport itself. That debate has yet to begin in earnest.

NOTES

1. Borghini and Magno, in fact, despite being members of the PDS's executive (*direzione*) were, at the same time, employed by Amato to do specific jobs for him as Prime Minister, something justified by Borghini on the grounds that he disagreed with his party's refusal to enter the government (*La Repubblica*, 6 June 1993).

2. Eugenio Scalfari, 'Come ai tempi di Moro', *La Repubblica*, 30 April 1993.

3. *L'Unità*, 11 January 1993 and 20 January 1993.

4. On the general issue of electoral reform see Bull and Newell 1993.

5. See *L'Unità* and *La Repubblica* 26 March 1993.

6. See Della Porta 1993 for an account of the first phase of the magistrates' action.

7. For good (critical) examples of the PDS's position see Anselmi 1993 and Colletti 1993.

8. Quoted in *La Repubblica*, 4 November 1993.

9. Interview in *La Repubblica* 9 December 1993.

10. See Rhodes 1994 for an account of the origins of the Progressive Alliance.

11. In fact, the percentage of *seats* the PDS gained in the Chamber of Deputies was only 18.25%

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